

Debating is a team sport – you must work together when preparing your case and during the debate. It also means that each speaker within the team has certain roles to play. It is important that each speaker understands and fulfils their role. These speaker roles might sound a bit restrictive, but they help the debate run smoothly and clearly so that everyone in the room understands what the debate is about and what each team stands for.

First Affirmative

Define the topic

The first task of the first speaker is to clearly set out the affirmative's interpretation of the topic and specifying the important issue(s) are that in contention in the debate. The definition should treat the topic as a phrase, rather than just a collection of individual words. Key words however may need to be individually defined.

Outline team line & split

The team line is a brief statement that summarizes the main arguments of your team. It may be closely related to the team split. The split is the way the arguments have been divided between the first and second speakers. It is essential to let the audience know early on in the debate exactly which way your team will be heading and the approach they will be taking to the debate.

Present positive material

The speaker should deal with those elements of the case allocated to the first speaker.

First Negative

Deal with any necessary definitional issues

If the negative has any substantial disagreements with the definition provided by the Affirmative then these must be dealt with immediately. If they wish to challenge the definition, they must prove to the adjudicator that they have the most reasonable definition. There are three steps in a definitional challenge:

1. Clearly state the alternative definition being proposed by the Negative.
2. Give arguments to show why their definition is the most reasonable definition.
3. Rebut the arguments presented by the Affirmative.

Rebuttal

The speaker should attack the main theme of the affirmative argument, as well as the specific issues raised by the first affirmative speaker.

Outline team line & split

Like the first affirmative, they should give an outline of the team case and the arguments to be dealt with by each speaker.

Present positive material

The speaker should deal with those elements of the case allocated to the first speaker.

Second Affirmative & Second Negative***Defend the definition if necessary***

If there are any definitional issues in the debate, then these need to be dealt with and hopefully fully cleared up. Both speakers should keep in mind, like the first negative, that they are trying to prove that their definition is the most reasonable.

Rebuttal

Each speaker should attack the main arguments of their opponents. The second affirmative should clearly identify the major areas of disagreement with the with the negative case and attack the specific arguments of the first negative. The second negative needs to attack the main arguments of the affirmative, focusing on the specific arguments raised by the second affirmative. They should spend approximately one third of their speech on rebuttal.

Present positive material

The speaker should then present the elements of their case allocated to them.

Third Affirmative & Negative

Both speakers should aim to present an overview by analysing the main themes of the debate. They should identify the essential issues on which the teams have disagreed, rebut the important arguments of the opposing team (it is important that the third affirmative attack the specific issues raised by the second negative) and defend any important attacks made against their own team's case. Both speakers should conclude their speech with a brief summary (about one to two minutes) of their teams' case